

Tips For Management of ADHD in Early Childhood

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- 1) Learn the symptoms and characteristics of ADD/ADHD. Understand behaviors and don't punish a child for being ADD/ADHD.
- 2) Keep your directions simple. Be prepared to repeat directions again and again. Don't get angry because a child doesn't remember what you wanted them to do or what order something was supposed to be completed in. Provide directions one instruction at a time.
- 3) Make sure you have the child's attention before providing instruction or directions. Use eye contact frequently to make sure they are paying attention. If giving directions, have the child repeat back what you have said.
- 4) Teach in a variety of ways. Use interactive techniques to teach. Involve as many of the senses as you can in each lesson. For example, when teaching the letters, use manipulatives they can touch, papers for them to color, songs they can sing, food beginning with the letter they can taste and smell. Making learning into a game will provide interaction and fun.
- 5) Make your home or classroom ADHD friendly. For younger children, cut out pictures of toys to place in the bins where they belong, pictures of crayons for the container for crayons. Use clear pouches to hold small objects (over the door clear plastic shoe holders work well) so that the objects don't get lost and clean up is easy.
- 6) Help develop a sense of making choices. The child may put on their coat to go outside or stay inside with another class.
- 7) Make sure there are a variety of toys and activities available for chronological ages as well as developmental. Children with ADD/ADHD can be emotionally immature and may need toys and activities that are challenging to their developmental age.
- 8) Develop a tolerance to activity. Hyperactive children need an outlet to move around. Sitting still may be impossible for them. Allow them movement without allowing them to disrespect others. For example, during reading time, allow them to move about, but not make noises to interrupt the story.
- 9) Accept a child's limitations. Accepting an individual and their abilities can make a large difference. Placing expectations on them that are beyond their abilities is not fair to the child, their classmates or the teacher. Accept what they can and cannot do and create activities around their abilities.
- 10) Children with ADD/ADHD need structure in their lives. Keep your schedule structured so that a child knows what to expect and when to expect it. Keep your daily routine predictable. If possible, use a chart and use pictures to depict activities in the order you do them. The child will know what is coming next and will be more prepared for it.
- 11) If a routine needs to be broken make sure the child is prepared. Adapting to change is not easy for the child with ADD/ADHD. Take extra time to explain the change in routine and provide adequate time for the child to adjust to the transition.
- 12) Make rules simple and consequences for breaking the rules known beforehand. Don't make up the rules as you go along. Provide consistency in rewards for behaving and consequences for misbehaving. Make sure children know what is expected of them and what will happen if they act appropriately and what will happen if they act inappropriately. For non-readers, make a chart with pictures showing behaviors and the rewards/consequences of each.

- 13) For inappropriate behavior, have consequences be immediate. Children with ADD/ADHD have a difficult time relating a consequence to an action if it is not immediate. For appropriate behavior, give an instant reward. Immediately point out the good behavior, give a pat on the back or a hug or if using a point system, immediately provide a point.
- 14) Provide an outlet for hyperactivity. Bouncing around the room won't stop because you tell the child to stop. Hyperactivity is real and must be dealt with accordingly. Punishing a child for being hyperactive is not the answer. Provide a space for the child to move around without disrupting others.
- 15) Provide frequent breaks and free time for hyperactive children to move around.
- 16) Watch for activities that are over stimulating or under stimulating. Both will cause hyperactivity. If an activity is not challenging, the children will find ways to stimulate themselves, usually inappropriately. If an activity is highly stimulating, the child may not be able to regulate their activity level. Provide a transitional time in between highly stimulating activities and quiet activities.
- 17) Be extremely specific in expectations. For example, if you were doing an activity of painting, you might have: paints, paintbrushes, smocks, paper, and cups of water. Instead of saying "Put your things away." Say, "First, let's put away the paints." Once that is completed, move onto the next item to be put away.
- 18) Use games and songs to help a child remember. Make songs up to include directions to help a child remember what to do. Anything that is made into a game will be more successful. If picking up toys becomes a game, it will be accomplished easier. If packing up things at the end of the day is done along with a song, coats, hats and belongings will be ready to go.
- 19) Children with ADD/ADHD are usually very intelligent and creative. Many have artistic or musical talents. Watch carefully for their talents and encourage their creativity.
- 20) Watch for successes. Success comes one step at a time. Keep your expectations realistic and watch for small steps. Encourage and praise the child with each small step.

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